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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000020

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [GV](#)  
SUBJECT: WATCHDOG COMMITTEE ENCOURAGES DIALOGUE AND  
CANCELLATION OF LABOR STRIKE

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Guinea's Watchdog Committee, a group that was originally formed in January 2007 in response to civil unrest, reconvened on January 7 at the People's Palace. With union leaders visibly absent, the meeting played out as an attempt by Conte supporters to undermine the Prime Minister's position. The Committee issued a formal declaration and called for dialogue, cancellation of the labor strike planned for January 10, and a review of the January 27 Accords. The Committee plans to meet again January 8 with union members in attendance. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) A public-civilian group known as the Committee de Veille, or Watchdog Committee, met on January 7 at the People's Palace in order to discuss Guinea's current political situation. The Watchdog Committee was established in January 2007 during the nationwide labor strike as a mechanism for encouraging dialogue between key actors. Yesterday's meeting was the first time the Committee had met since the period of civil unrest in early 2007.

¶3. (U) Watchdog Committee members include:

- Aboubacar Sompore, President of the National Assembly
- Lamine Sidibe, President of the Supreme Court
- The Economic and Social Council
- The Patronat
- The National Council of Civil Society Organizations
- The Christian Advisory Council
- The Council of Imams
- The Unions-Intersyndicale

¶4. (U) According to POL contacts, union leaders did not attend the meeting because they were meeting with the prime minister at the same time. Local press reports criticized the unions for failing to participate. The Committee is reconvening on January 8 with the expectation that all members will be present.

¶5. (U) The Committee meeting was broadcast on national television, which is now controlled by Conte crony Issa Conde. The President of the Supreme Court and long-time ally of President Conte, Lamine Sidibe, declared that the PM's denouncement of the President's New Year's Day speech was an affront to the presidency and overstepped the bounds of the PM's authority. Sidibe further emphasized that Guinea is

governed under a presidential regime and as such, the president has the right to govern as he sees fit and do what he sees as necessary. The Committee also discussed the unions' plan to resume a nationwide strike on January 10. Some members stated that the strike is essentially a political move and the unions should only strike for economic reasons. The Patronat, which was represented by the Yousouff Diallo contingent rather than the Mamadou Syllah camp, which is close to Conte, said that the strike is a bad idea in general because it undermines the January 27 Accords. Despite the absence of the unions, the Watchdog Committee issued a formal statement encouraging a strong dialogue between all interests, recommending calling off the strike, and revising the January 27 Accords.

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BACKGROUND  
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¶6. (SBU) This Watchdog Committee was the main mechanism for negotiations in early January/February 2007. However, the committee as a whole was generally ineffective as far as getting members to come to an agreement. At the same time, it was a useful tool for bringing everyone together and getting them to talk to each other. The decisions and agreements that were made were generally made on the sidelines of the Committee meeting as key members, especially religious leaders, worked independently with different factions in order to get everyone to come together. The Committee was ultimately not able to resolve the political situation until Nigerian General Babangida came to mediate negotiations.

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COMMENT  
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¶7. (C) The Committee discussions seemed to be an attempt to build a case against the PM, thereby undermining his authority. In many ways, the meeting played out like a bad dinner theater show. Sidibe and Sompore in particular appeared to have a clear agenda and that was to pull the rug out from underneath Kouyate. The absence of the unions also undermined the overall legitimacy of the discussions. The Committee is meeting again on January 8, allegedly with the unions present. END COMMENT.  
CARTER